

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Ron DeSantis
Governor

Scott A. Rivkees, MD
State Surgeon General

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

4/1/20 COVID-19 UPDATE:

Your local health department is here to assist you with questions related to COVID-19 (new coronavirus). There is ONE confirmed case in Gulf County and NO confirmed cases in Franklin County. Full Press Release can be found [HERE](#).

Gulf and Franklin County Health Department Locations are OPEN and will remain open as staff continue to work on the COVID-19 response efforts.

For Daily Gulf County COVID-19 Updates straight to your phone: text GULFCOVID to 888777

Florida Department of Health in Gulf County: 850-227-1276

Florida Department of Health in Franklin County: 850-653-2111

There is also a hotline available at **866-779-6121** or email COVID-19@flhealth.gov.

NEW TESTING SITE IN PORT ST. JOE

PanCare of Florida will begin alternate COVID-19 testing in Port St. Joe (Gulf County) as of Friday, April 3rd from 10-2pm EST. The COVID-19 response team is available at (850) 215-4181 Monday-Friday to conduct phone screenings. To qualify for testing, you must complete all of the 4 following steps, or you will be turned away at the testing site.

Step 1: Exhibit symptoms (fever, cough & shortness of breath).

Step 2: Call the PanCare COVID-19 response line at (850) 215-4181.

Step 3: Conduct a phone screening.

Step 4: Upon qualifying for testing, you will be assigned a unique ID number and given an appointment date and time. You must present the provided ID number at your appointment with your photo ID when you arrive at the testing location (528 Cecil G. Costin Sr. Blvd.)

MENTAL HEALTH

COVID-19 have you feeling STRESSED/ANXIOUS/DEPRESSED/UNSURE? NEED SUPPORT? CALL 850-270-8911, available 9-5pm EST. If you are in need of immediate mental health services call one of the agencies below available 24/7:

- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- SAMSA Disaster Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 or the Crisis Text Line: Text "HOME" to 741-741

Bilingual Emotional Support Helpline

Florida Blue launched a 24-hour, free emotional support helpline for all Floridians, in partnership with New Directions Behavioral health. Any Floridian – even if uninsured or insured by another plan – [can call 833-848-1762](tel:833-848-1762) for support in managing feelings of stress, anxiety, grief or fear related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Counselors cannot provide information on COVID-19 testing or treatment.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSION UPDATES

Gulf County Board of County Commissioners recently signed a letter and resolution in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please visit: <http://www.gulfcounty-fl.gov/home> Per the resolution, visitors (day trips or extended

Florida Department of Health

in GULF COUNTY

2475 Garrison Avenue, Port St. Joe, Florida 32456

PHONE: 850/227-1276 • FAX 850/227-7587

www.FloridaHealth.gov

TWITTER: HealthyFLA

FACEBOOK: FLDepartmentofHealth

YOUTUBE: fldoh

FLICKR: HealthyFla

PINTEREST: HealthyFla

stays) are asked to stay home in their primary communities. It also advises and directs a mandatory 14-day self-quarantine for visitors entering Gulf County from highly affected areas. Beach closures were extended 14 days (through April 9th).

For more information on community spread, see below:

- All persons who enter the State of Florida from an area with substantial community spread – (widespread across their entire state or defined areas in their state) – need to isolate or quarantine for a period of 14 days from the time of entry into the State of Florida or the duration of the person’s presence in the State of Florida, whichever is shorter.
- This includes the following places and more: New York Tri-State Area: (Connecticut, New Jersey, New York), Georgia, California, Illinois, and Colorado. Please see the US map on this CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html>. If you hover over a particular state it indicates if there is community transmission in the state (Ex. widespread or defined area). If you click on the state, it will take you to the state health department website for more information. If you have questions, please reach out to us as it is ever changing.

Keep in mind Florida also has defined areas popping up around the state. Examples like Broward, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, and more.

CDC Guidance for Travelers from Countries with widespread Sustained (Ongoing) transmission can be found at <https://floridahealthcovid19.gov/travelers/>

TESTING

Call your health care provider first or if you are symptomatic to determine the need for testing. If a person thinks they have COVID-19, they should call their health care provider before going to their office so the provider can take precautions to prevent exposing other people. In some cases, they are going to meet you in the parking lot. It’s just a precaution. We are really trying to keep our healthcare workers safe. Other patients safe. Review your signs, symptoms and travel history with your physician. Your physician will evaluate you for other possible causes of respiratory illness and also contact the county health department to coordinate COVID-19 testing.

- To be prioritized for testing, patients must meet the **state’s criteria**, which evaluates a combination of symptoms and risk factors. Their samples will be sent to the closest laboratory.
- If you don’t meet priority criteria, you can discuss with your provider about possibly getting tested at a commercial laboratory (e.g. LabCorp or Quest).
- State lab results are generally available within 24-48 hours. Commercial labs can take 5-6 days. Turnaround time can for all be affected by demand.
- ALL positive tests are reported to the DOH system and contact tracing will begin immediately.

STATE ISSUED EXECUTIVE ORDERS:

SAFER AT HOME

On April 1, 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis issued [Executive Order 20-91](#), requiring all persons in Florida to limit their movements and personal interactions outside of their home to only those necessary to obtain or provide essential services or conduct essential activities. For a more extensive list of essential services view [Executive Order 20-89](#).

DOH HEALTH ADVISORY

On March 26th, State Surgeon General, Scott Rivkees, M.D. issued a [Public Health Advisory](#) stating all individuals over the age of 65 and all individuals of any age with high-risk conditions should remain in their residence and

take all measures to limit the risk of exposure to COVID-19. To further encourage social distancing as a COVID-19 prevention method, the order advises that businesses allow telework of employees to the extent that can be accomplished without significantly disrupting the ability to conduct business.

TRAVELERS

On March 27, [Executive Order 20-87](#) orders all parties engaged in rental of vacation rental properties to suspend vacation rental operations. Vacation rentals are prohibited from making new reservations or bookings and shall not accept new guests for check-in for the duration of this order.

On March 27, [Executive Order 20-86](#) directs all persons who enter the State of Florida from an areas with substantial community spread, to include the State of Louisiana, inclusive of those entering the State of Florida by roadways, to isolate or quarantine for a period of 14 days from the time of entry into the State of Florida or the duration of the person's presence in the State of Florida, whichever is shorter.

RESTAURANTS

On March 20, [Executive Order 20-71](#) directs all restaurants and food establishments to suspend on-premises food and alcohol consumption for customers.

For more information on your local restaurants:

[Check out the Digital Directory: Restaurants in Gulf County and Mexico Beach, FL](#)

Gulf County Chamber of Commerce resource list: <http://business.gulfchamber.org/list/>

MEDICAL PROCEDURES

On March 26, [Executive Order 20-85](#), directed the Secretary of Department of Management Services to amend the state employee health benefits plan to include telehealth and immunization services at no additional cost to employees.

On March 20, [Executive Order 20-72](#) was issued prohibiting medically unnecessary, non-urgent or non-emergency procedures or surgeries.

GYMS AND FITNESS CENTERS

[Executive Order 20-71](#) directs the closure of gymnasiums and fitness centers within the State of Florida.

SMALL BUSINESS LOANS

On March 17, Governor activated the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program to support small businesses impacted by COVID-19. The bridge loan program provides short-term, interest-free loans to small businesses that experienced economic injury from COVID-19. The application period is open and runs through May 8, 2020. Interested businesses should visit FloridaDisasterLoan.org for more information.

CLOSURES & RESTRICTIONS:

ALL Gulf County beaches; beach access and beach parking are closed for 14 days (until April 9).

Mexico Beach beaches will be closed effective 11:59 PM on March 31st for fourteen days.

City of Port St. Joe closes city boat ramps for two weeks (until April 13).

Florida State Parks will close to the public effective Monday, March 23, 2020.

ALL Government Buildings will be closed to the public effective at the close of business on March 18. You may reach any department by telephone or email.

PHARMACY UPDATES

Effective immediately, all BUY RITE DRUG Pharmacies will be operating via drive-through only. Staff will do what they can to assist with store items through the drive-through.

CVS Pharmacy is open and full-functioning and has NO plans on closing.

PIGGLY WIGGLY PSJ is open 6am to 10pm, 7 days a week and is now offering ONLINE shopping. Visit www.DurensPigglyWiggly.com

FAMILY DOLLAR is open 8am to 8pm, daily and senior hours are the first hour of operations.

LIBRARIES

Both Gulf County libraries are closed to the public until further notice. Staff are working at the Port St. Joe location on Tuesday and Thursday and at the Wewahitchka location on Monday and Friday to provide curbside delivery of checked out books. Please call ahead to make reservations on specific items.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

In order to promote social distancing and discourage gatherings of 10 or more people, the health department lobby will no longer receive visitors. Clients arriving at the health department for appointments or birth/death certificates are encouraged to call the front desk at (850) 227-1276, before entering the lobby. Anyone seeking additional services should also call the front desk before attempting to enter the lobby.

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR LOCAL TDC:

Due to Public Health Concerns, Gulf County Beaches are to remain closed for 14 days (until April 9, 2020).

We are sincerely asking you to please stay home. Together, we can help slow the spread of COVID-19. Gulf County is a smaller rural county with very limited resources. The Governor of Florida has suspended all vacation rentals and The Gulf County Board of County Commissioners have passed a resolution urging visitors to stay in their own homes during this time. Please do your part!

We are putting out information as soon as we can through our [COVID-19 Landing Page](#). You can read all of the information that we mentioned above plus more. You can also always reach out to us via our Live Chat option on our Website at VisitGulf.com. That chat is available from 8 AM - 5 PM ET.

A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AMERICA

Prevent Child Abuse Month

In these unpredictable times, many of you are thinking about the families in your lives—your own, those in your community, and families across the country affected by COVID-19. The risk to our children for experiencing child abuse and neglect in times of extreme stress and uncertainty—like in anticipation of natural disasters and outbreaks such as this—is actually quite high.

Tips for Staying Connected

For our collective health and well-being, we must adhere to the requirements of social distancing. Physical distance, however, does not mean we need to remain socially disconnected or isolated. In fact, individuals, families, and communities can maintain the one thing we all need right now...**social connection!** Here are some clear, concrete tips for physically distancing while staying emotionally and socially connected

<https://preventchildabuse.org/coronavirus-resources/>

On Friday, April 3, show support for children and families by wearing blue on Wear Blue Day. Post a picture or video on social media including the #WearBlueDay2020 hashtag. Your health department has programs to connect you and your family to resources. We are here for you! Gulf: 850-227-1276, Franklin: 850-653-2111.

ABOUT COVID-19

COVID-19 transmission is more commonly spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, including when an individual coughs or sneezes. This is why social distancing and keeping at least 6 feet between you and other people is so important. A person can get COVID-19 by touching droplets that can land on objects and surfaces and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth, although, this is a less common mode of transmission. The vast majority of cases have come from close, sustained contact with an individual with COVID-19.

Symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as many as 14 days following exposure. Most people recover from the COVID-19 without needing special treatment. The elderly and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems and diabetes, and those with compromised immune systems are more likely to develop serious illness. There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. As a reminder, the Department always recommends everyday preventive actions to help impede the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick;
- Staying home when you are sick and avoiding contact with persons in poor health;
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth;
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then disposing of the tissue;
- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing;
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty; and
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household spray or wipe.

What should I do if I recently traveled to an area with an outbreak of COVID-19?

If you are returning from an area with an outbreak of COVID-19, the CDC is recommending you self-isolate for 14 days immediately upon returning from your travels, even if asymptomatic (no symptoms). Follow the CDC steps to help protect other people in your home and community: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath during those 14 days, contact your health care professional and mention your recent travel. Your provider will work with the health department to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19. If you have had close contact with someone showing these symptoms who has recently traveled from an impacted area, you should call a health care professional and mention your close contact and their recent travel.

STAY INFORMED:

To get the latest information, visit [FloridaHealth.gov](https://www.floridahealth.gov) and follow on Social Media:

Florida Department of Health: Twitter [@HealthyFla](https://twitter.com/HealthyFla) or Facebook [@FLDepartmentofHealth](https://www.facebook.com/FLDepartmentofHealth)

Gulf/Franklin County Community Health Improvement Partners: [Facebook Gulf/Franklin County Community Health Improvement Partners](https://www.facebook.com/GulfFranklinCountyCommunityHealthImprovementPartners)